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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OF THE

STATE OF NEW-YORK,

ON THE

CONTINUED PIRACIES OF VESSELS FITTED
OUT IN GREAT BRITAIN UPON
AMERICAN COMMERCE.

Saturday, February 21, 1863.

New-York :

JOHN W. AMERMAN, PRINTER,
No. 47 CEDAR STREET.

1863.

1871

Received of the Treasurer of the City of New York

the sum of \$100.00

for the purchase of the City of New York

the sum of \$100.00

for the purchase of the City of New York

the sum of \$100.00

for the purchase of the City of New York

the sum of \$100.00

Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York.

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CONTINUED PIRACIES OF VESSELS FITTED OUT IN GREAT
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At a special meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York, held Saturday, 21st February, 1863, "to hear a report from the Committee appointed to recommend to the Chamber what action should be taken by it in reference to the continued piracies of the ALABAMA and other vessels fitted out in Great Britain," and for other business, Mr. PELATIAH PERIT, President of the Chamber, in the chair, Mr. A. A. Low, as Chairman of the special Committee on this subject, submitted the following

REPORT.

At a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York, held on the 21st day of October last, the facts connected with the burning of the ship Brilliant and other American vessels were submitted, and a series of resolutions was adopted, the object of which was—

1st. To show that, thenceforth, burning ships at sea would be shunned by the American sailor, as indicating the near presence of a pirate ready to continue the work of destruction inaugurated by Captain SEMMES, of the Alabama.

2d. That all who willingly aided and abetted this crusade of fire against the commerce of the United States, must be considered as participators in a crime against humanity, because the people of all nations were exposed to the unhappy consequences of such acts of barbarity.

3d. That in permitting ships to go forth from the ports of Great Britain, manned with British seamen, and in permitting an armament to follow them, for the detestable work of plundering and destroying American vessels, an offence against neutral rights is encouraged by Great Britain not less serious than that on the plea of which in a recent case the British Government threatened to plunge this country into war.

4th. That, to consign British and American property to destruction by fire on the ocean, without adjudication, was an aggravation of the offence against neutrals which ought to be denounced as a crime by the civilized nations of the world.

5th. That such enormities could not be committed on the high seas without jeopardizing the peace and commerce of all nations.

6th. To warn the merchants of Great Britain that the repetition of such acts could not fail to produce the most widespread exasperation in this country, and to invoke the friendly offices of all who love peace and good will to assist in arresting the departure of other hostile vessels from the ports of Great Britain, in order to avert the calamity of war.

7th. And, finally, it was resolved as follows :

“That it is the desire of this Chamber, as it is the interest of all its members, to cherish sentiments of amity with the people of Great Britain, to maintain those cordial relations which have led to profitable intercourse, and to strengthen the ties that knit them together in mutual courtesy and respect.”

Further proceedings of this Chamber, on the second day of January, 1863, a copy of which is annexed, led to the appointment of a Committee of ten to consider the whole subject, and “report at a special meeting to be called for the

purpose, what action it becomes this Chamber to adopt in the premises."

To the duty thus assigned them your Committee have addressed their most serious thoughts, and now beg respectfully to report:

That, having reviewed the previous action of this Chamber, they find it is characterized by a spirit of forbearance and a tone of friendly remonstrance under a sense of injury, which they hope will continue to mark its deliberations.

Your Committee have not felt it to be a part of their duty to consult international law as bearing upon the subject under consideration, because it belongs to other and abler hands to assert and vindicate the law, and to enforce the legal remedy for injuries sustained by American citizens, wherever that remedy may lie. Nor is it the purpose of your Committee to embarrass the action of government by suggesting retaliatory measures in obedience to the promptings of feeling, passion or pride, for they are satisfied the honor of the nation is safely lodged in the hands of the nation's rulers; but they deem it to be within their province to present to this Chamber such additional facts as have come to their knowledge, and to contrast the course of the American government in past years with that of the British government at the present time.

As a guide to the American *theory* upon the law of neutrality, your Committee refer to the following extract from the message of President PIERCE to Congress, in 1855. That portion of the extract which is irrelevant has been frequently quoted by the *London Times*, and other English papers in the interest of the "Confederate States," while the part which is pertinent has been omitted.

"In pursuance of this policy, the laws of the United States do not forbid their citizens to sell to either of the belligerent powers articles contraband of war, or to take munitions of war or soldiers on board their private ships, for transportation; and, although in so doing, the individual citizen exposes his property or person to some of the hazards of war, his acts do not involve any breach of national neutrality, nor, of themselves, implicate the gov-

ernment. Thus, during the progress of the present war in Europe, our citizens have, without national responsibility therefor, sold gunpowder and arms to all buyers, regardless of the destination of those articles. Our merchantmen have been and still continue to be largely employed by Great Britain and by France in transporting troops, provisions and munitions of war to the principal seat of military operations, and in bringing home their sick and wounded soldiers ; but such use of our mercantile marine is not interdicted either by the international or by our municipal law, and, therefore does not compromise our neutral relations with Russia.

“But our municipal law, in accordance with the law of nations, peremptorily forbids not only foreigners but our own citizens to fit out within the United States a vessel to commit hostilities against any State with which the United States are at peace, or to increase the force of any foreign armed vessel intended for such hostilities against a friendly State.

“Whatever concern may have been felt by either of the belligerent powers, lest private armed cruisers, or other vessels in the service of one, might be fitted out in the ports of this country to depredate on the property of the other, all such fears have been utterly groundless. Our citizens have been withheld from any such act or purpose by good faith and by respect for the law.”

In harmony with these views, in the same year, the Chamber of Commerce used the following language :

“*Resolved*, That the merchants of New-York, as part of the body of merchants of the United States, will uphold the government in the full maintenance of the neutrality laws of the country ; and we acknowledge and adopt, and always have regarded the acts of the United States for preserving their neutrality as binding in honor and conscience, as well as in law, and that we denounce those who violate them as disturbers of the peace of the world, to be held in universal abhorrence.”

To illustrate American *practice*, a printed correspondence relating to the purchase and fitting out of the ship United

States, and the building and fitting out of the steamship of the line General Admiral," is herewith submitted. (See Appendix.)

From the *theory* and the *practice* of the American government, as thus demonstrated, your Committee turn to the exhibition of British neutrality, as exemplified in the Alabama, as it is revealed in the rebel correspondence recently published, and as it is now manifest in the active operations of British ship-yards.

In a recent letter from England, upon authority which is deemed wholly reliable, it is said :

"The LAIRDS, at Liverpool, are building four steamers, two "large rams, and two others something like the Alabama. "The rams, I know, are for the rebels; the other two I "have some doubts about. I think they are all for the "rebels.

"W. C. MILLER & SON are building a steam gunboat, the "same as the Oreto, of wood. There is no doubt about this "vessel. She is intended as a privateer for the rebels. A "large ram is being built at Glasgow, by GEORGE and JAMES "THOMSON, which is also intended for the rebels.

"There are two other vessels—one at Dumbarton, launch- "ed, the other at Stockton—about which there are doubts. "They are suspicious. It is probable they are blockaders, "but possibly privateers. One of LAIRD's rams will be fin- "ished, so they say, about the 1st of April, the other a month "or two later. The other two building at their yard will "not be finished before the 1st of March. MILLER's boat, I "should judge, will not be ready for sea before that time, "(March.) The ram at Glasgow will not be done before "June. She is very large. You must understand all of "these yards, where the vessels are building, are surrounded "with high walls, and no one can enter without a permit."

Such is, practically, the answer returned by the merchants and builders of Great Britain to the remonstrances of this Chamber, embodied in the proceedings of the 21st of October, above referred to.

It remains to be seen whether the British government will justify or not the better hopes hitherto entertained of British

subjects, which your Committee are unwilling wholly to abandon.

The more recent acts of the Alabama, and of her comrade, the Florida, are familiar to all readers of the daily papers, and do not require particular mention. Both vessels have, at times, sought refuge in the colonial ports of Great Britain, France and Spain, and their commanders, although bearing in their hands the torch of the incendiary, have been greeted as friends worthy of the most marked attentions. Every facility has been afforded these steamers to repair damages and to re-coal, and if their crews desert they are sent back through the aid of the local police. In due time the fires are once more lighted, and the vessels go out to sea to resume their work of arson.

Your Committee may be permitted to recall to the notice of the Chamber one or two events that bear upon this question of neutrality.

About two years ago the present leaders of the rebellion against the government of the United States were Senators and Representatives in the American Congress; and while the legislative halls yet echoed the voices of these men who had sworn to sustain the Constitution and the laws of the land, they were plotting treason in their hearts. They turned their backs upon the Capitol, entered upon the seizure of public property, and finally upon acts of secession and open rebellion. These things were as well known abroad as at home; yet these very men had barely become known to foreign courts as rebels against a friendly government, when, by foreign courts, they were elevated to the condition and standing of belligerents.

The possible consequences of such a procedure were not unforeseen; but the Chamber made no formal complaint, feeling that American ships on the ocean were safe from attack by a people without a single vessel of war, and hence as harmless on the sea as, without foreign aid, they would have been hopeless on the land.

From that time to this the harbors of Nassau and Bermuda have been great military depots for the "Confederate States," from which the most necessary supplies have been

drawn, and by means of which the rebellion has been fostered and sustained. These ports have been the convenient resort of vessels employed in running the blockade, and equally open to British built steamers sailing under the rebel flag as privateers. Still the Chamber of Commerce remained silent so long as the assistance thus rendered was limited to the sale of arms, ammunition and stores ; but your Committee respectfully suggest that this Chamber has a right, and has reason to complain, and to reiterate its complaint of an interpretation of the neutrality law, which is at variance with both the theory and practice of the American government, as already shown—an interpretation which places at the command of the rebels the forges, arsenals, ship-yards, seamen and ships ; in a word, all the various instrumentalities of the greatest naval power of the world ; and the Chamber of Commerce may well join to its complaint the bitter lament, that a nation, claiming to be foremost in the advancement of civilization, and the special guardian and exponent of commercial honor, should take an attitude so repugnant to the spirit of the age !

In conclusion, your Committee believe it is best, at the present time, that the action of this Chamber should be limited to a statement of facts, as they bear upon a gigantic wrong to our country and its commerce, so that public opinion throughout the world may be directed to the import of these facts and the dangers they involve, in the hope, too, that by this means the wrong may be repaired and the danger averted.

Respectfully submitted.

A. A. LOW,
C. H. MARSHALL,
LEOPOLD BIERWIRTH,
ROBT. B. MINTURN,
E. NYE,
DENNING DUER,
J. D. JONES.

New-York, February 20, 1863.

Mr. Low addressed the Chamber :

Before submitting these resolutions to the Chamber, I ask leave to say a few words. The object of the remonstrance, it will be seen, is to show that upon this subject of neutrality the course of the American government has been consistent ; that its theory and practice have been harmonious ; that the government and the people have acted in good faith ; that the government has maintained its laws, and the merchants and ship-builders of our country have scrupulously observed them ; carefully, honorably, observed them. It is shown by the correspondence, part of which I have read, that during the war between England and France on the one side and Russia on the other, one of our ship-builders, WILLIAM H. WEBB, actually suspended the building of the line-of-battle ship "General Admiral," although this vessel had been contracted for previous to the commencement of the war. Her construction was suspended during the whole continuance of the war, out of the respect of our government to foreign nations on the subject of neutrality. On the other hand, it is shown that when, about the year 1848, the German government, then attempting its formation, sent here to purchase a ship of war, our own government first permitted and countenanced the equipment of the ship and facilitated all the operations of the agent of the German government ; but upon the representation, it is supposed, of an inferior power in the north of Germany, (Denmark,) the work was discountenanced by the government and abandoned, and all the facilities which had been first granted under the administration of President POLK were withdrawn. Still the agents went on and fitted out the ship ; but when she was about to leave this country, the government demanded bonds in the sum, I believe, of \$900,000, (although Mr. BIERWIRTH is careful to say he does not recollect whether it was \$500,000 or \$900,000, his impression being that they were for \$900,000,) that it should *never* be used against any country or people at peace with the United States. These bonds were only subsequently cancelled by special act of Congress.

Now, to contrast the conduct of our government with that of England. What does the British government do, in the

case of the "Alabama?" Everybody but the British government and the British people well understood the character of that vessel. It was persistently and industriously represented to the British government, for weeks before she left port, that she was intended for the service of the Confederate States. And what did the British government do? Did it prevent her departure, or stop the preparations making to fit her for sea? No. But it acknowledged the justice of the complaints, because, when about to go to sea on a trial trip, it required her nominal owners to give bonds in £20,000. Every one, not partial to the Confederate States, believed, when she went to sea on this "pleasure trip," that she would never return. What was the character of that "pleasure trip?" Its character is pretty well understood at this time. It was the trip of a buccaneer, going forth to burn and destroy the commerce of a friendly nation.

I would say one word more on this subject. The "Alabama" went to sea, after giving bonds in the sum of £20,000. Now, as has been justly observed, the fact of bonds having been required was sufficient proof that the British government was not wholly in the dark as to the character of the "Alabama." The bonds were given, and, I understand, have been since paid; it is to be hoped they were paid in the interest of American citizens, whose property has been burned and destroyed, so that Great Britain may respond to our claims for property burned by one of her vessels, when these claims are properly presented. Now, upon this mode of warfare as practiced by SEMMES and MAFFITT, by burning vessels at sea, I think there is an unjustifiable degree of indifference. I do not know how others regard the rights of sailors; but, to me, the sailor has rights on the ocean as sacred as the rights of the peaceable man on shore in his dwelling. The sailor's home is on the deep; the ship is his domicile; and when the hand of the incendiary is turned against the home of the sailor, I think as great a wrong is committed as if the incendiary's hand were turned against a dwelling on shore. Nay, a greater wrong; for, if your dwelling is burned on shore, you may take refuge in that of a neighbor. But not so the sailor. When his home is set on fire, his only re-

fuge is the chains of the enemy. He is transferred from his domicile on sea to the chains of the pirate; and I am sorry to say, the hands that are used in this wicked work, are British hands. That, Sir, is the kind of refuge the sailor finds, whose home on the ocean is destroyed by fire. And yet, Sir, the Captain of the "Alabama," and of the "Oreto," can go to sea and burn ship after ship, and commit their crews to chains, and return to the colonial ports of Great Britain, France or Spain, to be welcomed, feasted and cheered. Of such things we have a right to complain. They violate all the better feelings of mankind; they violate international comity, and teach men not to discriminate between the incendiary and the honest trader, but to serve all alike, with like courtesy.

Now, Sir, I do not understand, as I said before, the indifference to the wrongs of the sailor involved in proceedings of this kind by the community. Great Britain especially was supposed to protect and guard the sailor's rights. A few years ago, at the Congress of Nations which met in Paris, Great Britain and France were foremost in efforts designed to abolish privateering on the ocean. They formed an international compact to that effect, and it was supposed that it was in obedience to an enlightened civilization, and to indicate an improvement in the public mind as to the mode of prosecuting war. Such was the supposition; but the events upon which I have commented indicate that it was not in obedience to a principle, but simply as a matter of convenience that such an agreement was made. What are the facts? Our vessels are burned and their crews cast into chains; and, instead of the indignation of these nations being provoked, the incendiary commanders go into their ports, are received by government officials, and treated with the utmost cordiality and marks of distinguished respect. This is the comment of foreign nations upon this act.

And what do we further see? Ten other vessels, rams and privateers, fitting out in the ship-yards of England, to illustrate their *practice*, as distinguished from their *theory* of neutrality. The British government, as well as the American government, has its theory. The theory of Great Britain was

announced in the neutrality proclamation of the Queen. We have the *practice* in their ship and dock yards, and wherever their naval force lies, by which the subjects of Great Britain give to the Confederates all the aid they require; and the great naval power of England is at this day, in effect, arrayed against the commerce of the United States, while the country of Great Britain is enjoying all the blessings of peace. We cannot overlook the fact. To a certain extent, the naval resources of Great Britain are placed at the command of the "Confederate States," and become a powerful auxiliary for the destruction of our commerce. And the full effect of this grievous wrong is not felt in the actual destruction wrought, but in the transfer of traffic from the American to the British flag. These things are properly held up in the report of the Committee, for the consideration of the public at large. It does seem to me desirable that the public mind should rest upon these outrages, and brand them with the character they properly deserve, and that the authors should be held up to the ignominy of the whole civilized world. War, I know, is destructive in every form; and in all times privateering has led to more or less burning at sea. But, in times past, it has been the exception, not the rule. Now, however, the "Alabama," the "Oreto" and others, go forth, not to obey the rule, but to make the exception the rule, and burn and destroy every where; and in regard to this course, so far as the opinion of foreign nations has been expressed at all, it has been expressed favorably; at least, if their silence may be so understood. I ask you, Sir, what would be thought of Capt. SEMMES if he should transfer the field of his operations from the sea to the land? If, visiting the borders of a friendly country—Canada, for instance—he should go forth, armed and equipped, to burn every domicil on the land, where peaceable people dwell in quiet; and suppose he returned from time to time to Canada, and the people of Canada should put into his hands the torch by which he was to light up our dwellings, what would be thought of such a crime as that, and the accessories to it? They must have a nicer sense of discrimination than I have, who distinguish between those who uniformly burn

ships—the home of the sailor—and those who burn dwellings on land, and charge to the latter the greater enormity. To my mind, the difference is against the men who burn the sailor's dwelling, because there is no place of refuge for him ; his only refuge is in the hospitable chains which Confederate (I might say British) hands hold in readiness to receive him.

The report was received, and, on motion, was unanimously adopted.

On motion of Mr. RICHARD W. WESTON, it was unanimously

Resolved, That the Chamber has heard, with profound interest, the report of the Committee appointed to recommend to the Chamber what action should be taken by it, in reference to the continued piracies of the “ALABAMA,” and other vessels fitted out in Great Britain, and adopt the same as the sense of the Chamber, and the Secretary is instructed to transmit copies duly authenticated, to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Navy.

Resolved, That the report and resolutions attending be printed for the use of the Chamber, and that copies be sent to the Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce of London, Liverpool and Glasgow, and to the Secretary of State, with request to transmit to the consular agents of the United States abroad.

I hereby certify that the above is a true record of so much of the proceedings of the Chamber, at its special meeting of February 21, 1863, as relate to the piracies upon American commerce.

JOHN AUSTIN STEVENS, Jr.,

Secretary.

New-York, Feb. 21, 1863.

APPENDIX.

CORRESPONDENCE

RELATING TO

THE PURCHASE AND FITTING OUT OF THE STEAMSHIP
"UNITED STATES," AND THE BUILDING AND
FITTING OUT OF THE STEAMSHIP OF THE
LINE "GENERAL ADMIRAL."

NEW-YORK, *January 19th*, 1863.

My dear Sir:

Will you have the kindness to commit to writing such particulars of your connection with the purchase and fitting out of the steamer "United States" for the "German government," as you gave to me verbally this morning?

The case, if I mistake not, has been cited on the other side of the water as a justification of Great Britain, or the subjects of Great Britain, in furnishing the so-called Confederate States with ships of war to destroy American commerce. It will be interesting to our community to know exactly what was done by our own government and by the government of Great Britain, in the case of the "United States," to protect neutral rights from invasion by the citizens and subjects of the two countries.

I remain very truly yours,

A. A. Low.

LEOPOLD BIERWIRTH, Esq.

NEW-YORK, *January 22d*, 1863.

My dear Sir :

In compliance with your wishes, I give you herewith the particulars of the purchase and fitting out of the steamer "United States" for the German government.

In the year 1848, the whole continent of Europe was thrown into political commotion. The result was a change of dynasty in France, and more or less important changes in the forms of government of other countries. Germany strove for the establishment of one great empire, under one federal head, and, as a preliminary step, the people called on Archduke JOHN, of Austria, to act as Reichsverweser, (Vicar,) and selected the City of Frankfort as the temporary seat of Deutsche Central Gewalt, (German Central Power,) where the parliament assembled, composed of the representatives of the people of Germany.

As soon as the preliminary organization was completed, the new governor sent a commissioner to this country for the purpose of purchasing one or more war steamers, directing him to be guided in his proceedings by the German Minister at Washington, who had been instructed to ask the assistance of the United States government. That assistance was granted. The Navy Department appointed Commodore PERRY and Captain HUDSON to give the German Minister and Commissioner the benefit of their experience, and the representatives of the German government intrusted the management of the commercial part of the business to two firms in New-York.

There were no war steamers for sale, and only three ocean steamships were offered, which the owners thought could be turned into war vessels—the Washington, the Herman and the United States. After careful examination by the naval officers, the Washington and Herman were pronounced unfit, and, on their recommendation, the "United States" was purchased by the agents of the Commissioners.

Steps were at once taken to convert the ship into a man of war, and while Commodore PERRY determined what the armament should be, Captain HUDSON suggested the required

alterations of hull and spars, &c., and planned the various and complicated arrangements under deck. This was in the latter half of the month of February, 1849.

On the 4th of March of that year, there was a change of administration, President Taylor succeeding President Polk, and immediately thereafter the officers of the United States Navy were ordered to withdraw from the business altogether, and the commandant of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, of which the use had been courteously offered to the German Commissioners, was directed to deny them all and every facility.

The change of feeling in Washington—so it was supposed, and I doubt not correctly—was the result of representations made by Denmark, which country was at the time engaged in the Schleswig-Holstein war, in which Prussia had taken the part of the Duchies. It was a comparatively small affair, and President POLK's administration had probably overlooked it, when evincing more friendly feelings toward Germany, than their successors in office.

The German Commissioners were simply informed that the arming and equipping of the ship "United States," with the knowledge of the United States government, was interdicted by the act of April 10th, 1820; but they still thought our government would not prevent the departure of the vessel, if the work to be done to her was performed by private citizens, who were presumed to have the right to construct and dispose of vessels as an article of commerce, and they, therefore, proceeded with the alterations and equipment of the ship, as well as circumstances would permit, though not very satisfactorily, deprived, as they now were, of government assistance.

After four months' labor the ship was ready for sea; but now, to the dismay of Commissioners and agents, the order came from Washington to stop the ship, not to allow her to leave the port; and the only modification of this order, obtained after long negotiation, and at the intercession of influential friends, was permission for the vessel to proceed to a neutral port in Europe, on giving bonds in the sum of ——— dollars, (I do not recollect whether the amount was

\$500,000 or \$900,000, or any figure between the two,) to the effect that the ship should *never* be used against any country or people at peace with the United States, and that she should not leave with more men on board than were required to bring her safely across the Atlantic.

Desirous to have the vessel in Europe, the Commissioners and agents complied with the conditions, and sent the vessel to Liverpool in command of Captain PALMER, of the merchant service ; ROBERT GOURLIE, who afterwards perished in the ill-fated Arctic, being first mate. There were no persons on board competent to work the ship in battle ; and had she been found at sea by a Danish cruiser, she would have fallen an easy prize. She remained at Liverpool until after the termination of the Schleswig-Holstein war ; while there, she was not allowed to hoist the German flag.

Whether or not it would have been practicable to evade our neutrality laws, in the way it is now done in England, I cannot tell. I only know that the thought to make the attempt could not occur to honorable men, like the German Minister and the Commissioner, nor to the parties whom they employed as their agents ; nor can it for a moment be supposed that the government of Germany would have countenanced a disgraceful act.

The bond was cancelled about a year later by a special act of Congress, passed unanimously at the request of some of the more prominent members of both Houses, as a mark of esteem for the German Minister, who had a personal interest in the matter, had gained the good-will of all, and was then on the eve of his return to Europe.

The transaction happened fourteen years ago. I have written from memory, having no opportunity to refer to books and papers ; but I am confident what I have said is essentially in conformity with the facts.

Let me still add that the "United States" was never used as a war vessel. The German Central Power soon came to an end ; the ship was sold to parties in Bremen, and reconverted into a passenger ship, under the name of *Hansa*, and, after a few trips to New-York, she was sold to the Galway line, and re-appeared here under the name "*Indian Empire*,"

making her last voyage hence to Ireland in October, 1858, when, in order to reach her port of destination, she had to use her cargo of cotton as fuel.

You are at liberty to make use of this letter.

I am, very truly, yours,

LEOPOLD BIERWITH.

A. A. Low, Esq.

31 BURLING SLIP,

January 19th, 1863.

Dear Sir :

Will you do me the favor to communicate in writing such information as, in your judgment, it is proper to give to the public, in relation to the building and fitting out of the steamship of war "Grand Admiral?" My object is simply this : to learn in what respect, if any, the building and fitting out of that vessel for the Russian government will justify the British in providing the so-called Confederate States with ships of war to destroy our commerce ; and whether or not your experience in this or other enterprises has been such as to show that our own government has been careful to protect the rights of neutrals against invasion by American citizens.

It is possible that all the information I seek has been given through the public prints. If so, I am not aware of it, and would be glad to know where it may be found.

In the absence of any other source from which to obtain a correct statement of the facts as they bear upon international relations, I trust you will excuse me for making such a request of you.

Our government may or may not be familiar with all the circumstances ; and, of course, I should not give publicity to aught you may communicate, except with your consent.

I am, very respectfully, yours,

A. A. Low.

WILLIAM H. WEBB, Esq.

January 20th, 1863.

A. A. Low, Esq.,

Dear Sir :

I am just now in receipt of yours of yesterday's date. The information you desire has been requested by another party, to whom I have promised an answer, and I will forward you a copy. In the mean time, I will say that the *order* for building a line-of-battle ship in this country was given by the Emperor NICHOLAS at St. Petersburg, *before* the declaration of war between the Allies and Russia; and further, that the construction of the vessel was *suspended during the whole continuance* of the war.

Yours, very truly,

W. H. WEBB.

NEW-YORK, January 22d, 1863.

A. A. Low, Esq.,

New-York :

Dear Sir :

I have the honor to reply as follows to your recent inquiry relative to the circumstances connected with the construction of the frigate "General Admiral" for the Russian Imperial government.

During the years 1851 and 1852, a correspondence on the subject of constructing vessels in this country was held between that government and myself, and an agent was sent to St. Petersburg on two different occasions. The Russian government, however, declined to contract through the medium of an agent, and invited me to St. Petersburg. I arrived there early in the summer of 1853, and in due time entered into a contract for the construction of a line-of-battle ship of 90 guns, the order bearing date St. Petersburg, August 31st, 1853, and I then returned to New-York and immediately commenced the work. Shortly after this, war was announced between Russia and the Allies, with all of whom

the United States was then at peace, and the legality of my continuing the prosecution of the work became questionable. The result was the *suspension* of the work, and *postponement* of the fulfillment of the contract *until after the restoration of peace*, as will fully appear from the following letter, viz. :

“NEW-YORK, *March 26th*, 1856.

“May it please your Highness :

“Reliable information having reached this country that negotiations for the establishment of peace between the Russian Imp. government and the Allies were about to be opened in Paris, the undersigned, trusting they may result successfully, most respectfully requests that your Highness will be pleased to permit the undersigned to call the early attention of your Highness to the contract for building a line-of-battle ship, &c., made between the Russian Imperial government and the undersigned, August 31st, September 12th, 1853, (more especially as the undersigned has long since made heavy expenditures in money in procuring timber for the building of said ship,) and intimate the wishes of the Russian Imperial government to the undersigned in relation thereto.

(Signed,) W. H. WEBB.

“To his Imperial Highness,

“The Grand Duke Constantine,

“*Gen’l Adm’l of the Russ. Imp. Navy.*”

An answer to the above letter, St. Petersburg, April 26, 1856, announced the contemplated departure of officers thence to this country, to proceed with the construction of the ship-of-the-line, resulting, however, in the production of the “General Admiral,” as originally proposed and designed by myself, instead of the old style line-of-battle ship proposed by the Russian naval authorities. The ship was completed

early in the spring, and sailed hence early in the summer of 1859. I have perhaps given more particulars than you desire, but you will please make such use thereof as you think proper.

Yours, very truly,

W. H. WEBB.

The foregoing correspondence was submitted to the Chamber with the report of the Committee.

JOHN AUSTIN STEVENS, Jr.

Secretary.

New-York, February 21, 1863.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,

JANUARY 2, 1863.

At a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, on Friday, January 2d, 1863, Mr. PELATIAH PERIT, President of the Chamber, in the Chair, the following letters from the President of the United States, the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of the Board of Trade, London, and the Secretary of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, were submitted :

Letter from the Hon. Secretary of the Navy.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,

December 11, 1862.

Sir,—I have received your letter of the 6th inst., enclosing a copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York, on the 4th inst., recommending and suggesting that one or more naval steamers be dispatched to cruise about the equator, &c., for the protection of American commerce, and, in reply, would respectfully state, the Department has already dispatched armed vessels in that direction.

I am, respectfully,

Your obd't serv't,

GIDEON WELLES,

Secretary of the Navy.

THE SECRETARY,

Chamber of Commerce, New-York.

Letter from Board of Trade of London.

OFFICE OF COMMITTEE OF

PRIVY COUNCIL FOR TRADE,

Whitehall, 2d December, 1862.

Sir,—I am directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to acknowledge the receipt of your

letter of the 11th ultimo, and I am to request that you will inform the Council that the resolutions passed by the Chamber on the subject of the burning of various ships by the "Alabama" have been received, and shall be laid before her Majesty's Government.

The twenty-five printed copies of the proceedings on the occasion of this meeting have since been received, and I am to express the thanks of this Board for the same.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. EMERSON TENNENT.

THE SECRETARY,

Chamber of Commerce, New-York.

Letter from the Secretary of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,

Liverpool, 8th Dec., 1862.

Sir,—I am directed by the President of this Chamber to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th ultimo, (erroneously addressed to the Board of Trade in London,) transmitting a series of resolutions, adopted by the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York, relative to the burning of the ship "Brilliant" by the steamer "Alabama," and I am to inform you that it shall be laid before the Council of this Chamber at the earliest opportunity.

I remain, Sir,

Your most obed't serv't,

ROBERT TRONSON, *Secretary.*

J. A. STEVENS, Jr., Esq.,

Sec. Chamber of Commerce, New-York.

The subject of the continued depredations of the *Alabama* was again introduced, and remarks were made by Messrs. A. A. Low and EZRA NYE.

The following preamble and resolutions were then introduced by Mr. A. A. Low and unanimously adopted :

Whereas, On the 21st day of October last, a statement emanating from Captain HAGAR, of the ship *Brilliant*, recently burnt at sea by the captain and crew of the steamer *Alabama*, was produced to this Chamber, and a series of resolutions were unanimously adopted, the object of which was to warn the merchants of Great Britain, in a friendly spirit, of the evil consequences likely to ensue from a repetition of such piratical acts, from the fitting out in the ports of Great Britain of other vessels like the *Alabama*, destined to plunder and destroy our commerce on the high seas ; and

Whereas, This Chamber are led to believe that other vessels have sailed, or are about to sail from Great Britain for the express purpose of destroying American ships in distant parts of the world, and in an answer of Earl RUSSELL to the Council of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, is found the following passage, to wit :

“ Sir,—I am directed by Earl RUSSELL to reply to your letter of the 5th instant, respecting the destruction by the Confederate steamer *Alabama*, of British property embarked in American vessels, and burnt by that steamer. Earl RUSSELL desires me to state to you, that British property on board a vessel belonging to one of the belligerents must be subject to all the risks and contingencies of war, so far as the capture of the vessel is concerned. The owner of any British property, not being contraband of war, on board a Federal vessel, captured and destroyed by a Confederate vessel of war, may claim, in a Confederate prize court, compensation for such destruction of property ;” and

Whereas, Action on the part of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, so far as is at present known, has been limited to a reference to the proceeding of this Chamber to their Council, and, on the part of the Lords of the Committee of Privy

Council for Trade to her Majesty's government, as set forth in the communication from Mr. TRONSON and Mr. TENNENT, secretaries of those honorable bodies ;

Whereas, Since the month of October last, it has come to the knowledge of this Chamber that the "Laurette," "T. B. Walls," and other ships have been captured by the Alabama, and that in the first named a considerable portion of the cargo was on British account, and certified to be such, and under the hand and seal of the British Consul ; and

Whereas, There is no evidence before this Chamber to show that, in the absence of a recognised government, of which to demand redress, the British government has issued orders to the naval commander of H. B. M.'s ships-of-war to run down and destroy the Alabama, as an offender against the property and honor of Great Britain, as well as an offender against the rights and interests of humanity ; and

Whereas, It is alleged that the Alabama is continually supplied from Great Britain with coal and ammunition, by means of which she is enabled to continue her piratical course against American commerce, the consequence being to raise the premium of insurances on American vessels and their cargoes, and to depress the rate of freights in American ships, and to transfer our carrying trade to vessels of other nations, this Chamber is led to the following conclusions :

First. That through the active instrumentality of the subjects of Great Britain, the so-called Confederate States are furnished with ships, men, arms and ammunition with which to war on the commerce of the United States.

Second. That without such foreign aid the States in revolt against the government of the United States would be powerless to effect any injury to American commerce on the high seas.

Third. That this war on American commerce, carried on by ships built and manned in Great Britain, if not rebuked by the British press generally, is not discouraged by the public sentiment of a once friendly nation, claiming to be guided by high and honorable principles, and is not effectually and thoroughly arrested by the strong will and stronger arm of the British government.

Fourth. That as a result of the foregoing facts and conclusions, the merchants of the United States are subjected, in a certain degree, to the evils which would attend a state of war with Great Britain, and are compelled to witness the carrying trade of their country transferred from their own vessels to British bottoms, under all the sanctions and advantages of peace and neutrality to the latter, while the source of this great peril, threatening to drive American commerce from the ocean, is of British origin ; now, therefore,

Resolved, That a Committee of ten be appointed to take into consideration the foregoing, and to report at a special meeting, to be called for the purpose, what action it becomes this Chamber to adopt in the premises.

Mr. Low, in support of the resolutions, referred to a statement that nine vessels were preparing to leave Liverpool to run the blockade, and that others were fitting out as privateers.

Mr. M. MAURY said that he had been informed by his correspondents abroad, that before long there would be more formidable vessels, of the character of the Alabama, afloat. He hoped the resolutions would be adopted.

The President appointed the following Committee, under the resolutions, and remarked that he had selected it from both ship-owners and underwriters, as they were the parties most concerned in the matter : Messrs. A. A. LOW, R. B. MINTURN, C. H. MARSHALL, DENNING DUER, THOMAS TILESTON, JOHN D. JONES, L. BIERWIRTH, W. H. ASPINWALL, MOSES H. GRINNELL, EZRA NYE.

A correct extract of so much of the minutes of the Chamber as refers to the subject of the piracies of the Alabama.

JOHN AUSTIN STEVENS, JR.,
Secretary.

New-York, February 21, 1863.

